



FAVI begins their annual fundraising drive

On Thursday, August 24, the Fundacion Arubano di Esnan Visualmente Incapacita or FAVI, began their annual fundraising efforts to support their important work. FAVI is the Foundation for the Visually Impaired, offer testing, programs of prevention, and social activities and special teaching that allows the fully blind and those with seriously impaired vision to lead fuller, more productive lives.

The FAVI center in Primavera provides special equipment for the visually impaired, such as modified computers, a special gym, and activities like handicraft classes, and dominoes that keep the blind active and involved. They are open for their clients five days a week, Monday through Friday, though they are working to provide service on Saturday also. Their specially trained staff knows how to work with the blind, particularly with blind or nearly blind children, so that they can fully develop mentally. The recent opening of a special "children's room," which works with black light to make special toys appear brighter, and so easier to see for blind children was made possible entirely by donations, as was the new center at Primavera.

Aside from the staff salaries, FAVI operates entirely on donations from generous and concerned individuals and companies. The special equipment, testing, and training they provide for the blind is free of charge to their clients, and so they are very dependent on donations. On Thursday, eleven individuals that devote the last third of every year to visiting companies and individuals to help raise the 75,000 Aruban florins, (\$42,857) that it takes to simply run the center annually received their fundraising packets. This amount is for only the basics, such as current, water, telephone and insurance. Welcome them when they come to your offices requesting assistance for FAVI.

Mieke de Droog, the Director of FAVI also brought forth the point that not only funds, but manpower and vehicles are need to assist FAVI in their work. At present, thanks to some generous donations, FAVI has acquired a bus to transport clients to the center, but the areas of the Hooiberg, Saveneta, Noord and Westpunt have individuals that would come and benefit from the programs if they could find transport. Anyone in the area that could assist in this effort is requested to call the director at 582-5222 or 582-5051 if they are willing to donate their time and the use of their vehicle.

On hand for the press conference was the President of FAVI, John Booi, who has been completely blind for the past thirty years, and his two sisters, also visually impaired to exhort the public to support the foundation's work.

Additionally lending his presence to the official commencement of the drive during the press conference was Mr. Ernest Brown, a new client of FAVI, who could attest to the importance of the services they offer the community, and how it has changed his life.

Though Mr. Brown has retired to Aruba from outside the island, he found after six years of sitting at home doing nothing, he was welcomed at the FAVI center where he learned to use a specially modified computer for the blind for the first time in his life, and a world of interaction and the internet has opened to him. "Don't just sit at home," he urges other visually impaired individuals, "I was surprised to find at this age I could still learn something, thanks to the instructor, Mrs. Barr. I am particularly impressed with the fact that people can come here, free of charge, and get such wonderful treatment by the people here. I call them the FAVI-lights, because in my humble opinion, they bring light to the blind."

Aruba's 2000 census revealed that the island is home to a population of over 1000 visually impaired, but the center counts only 245 as regular members. They urge those that are blind or seriously impaired to also contact the center to receive training that will allow them to work with and triumph over their disability and so lead fuller, richer, and more active lives.